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AUTHOR Hochheimer, John L.
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ABSTRACT

Journalism educational practices have constrained students and left many of them ill-prepared professionally. A new journalism program being prepared at Ithaca College replaces the hierarchical model of education with a more "dialogic" approach, and demonstrates ways in which students can become more active participants in their own education. The journalism major is divided into seven course areas, to correspond to the areas in which journalism students should be proficient. These seven areas--Communication Core, Journalism Foundation and Concentration, Critical Media Studies, Writing, Second Subject Area, Modern Language, and Electives--are designed to teach students how to conduct coherent and probing inquiry, to propose, analyze, and evaluate strategy, and to express themselves in both oral and written form with precision, clarity, and vigor. (The Ithaca College Journalism Program Structure is included, and 21 references are appended.) (PRA)

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EXPLORING NEW DIRECTIONS FOR JOURNALISM EDUCATION: THE PROGRAM AT ITHACA COLLEGE

by

John L. Hochheimer
Roy H. Park School of Communications
Ithaca College
Ithaca, New York 14850
(607) 274-3242

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the practice of journalism education which has constrained students, leaving many of them ill-prepared professionally. The paper then describes a new journalism program being prepared at Ithaca College. This program involves replacing a hierarchical model of education with a more "dialogic" approach, demonstrating ways in which students can become active participants in their own education.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

> "If you train (journalists) for the first day on the job, they're out of date on the first day on the job...you ought to be training them to think and to evaluate and to analyze and to question, train them to challenge their own assumptions about the world in which they live, and the whole notion of what the role is of communication in society" (Fancher, 1990).

Journalism education, like journalism itself, is undergoing a major re-examination of its premises and its practice. As the nature of the news, and the industries which record, produce, and transmit it to the public are changing, so, too, must the approaches of educators, as well as their interactions with their students.

Many authors have been calling for the recognition that learning the practice of journalism cannot be severed from its critical analysis (e.g., Bruck, 1985; Downing, Mohammadi, and Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1990; Goldman, 1990; Hochheimer, in press; Nerone, 1990; Schulman, 1991). Journalism education in the United States has regularly been decried by luminaries in the industry as being of little value for teaching students what they need to know to work for them. Standard journalism education teaches students to stand apart from the world, to observe and to report on it, but not to participate in it (Hochheimer, 1990).

Students have learned that to succeed as journalists often means to accept the world on the terms set by others, rather than to interact with the world on their own.[1] They see models for

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[1]As Max Weber (1921 in 1958) observed, the journalist's lot is a precarious one, balanced between peerage with a society's powerful, yet condemned to the hostility and suspicion reserved for the outsider. More recently, it is the individual reporter who may be esteemed, whereas "the media" in general tend to be more highly suspect for misusing its power for economic or ideological ends. See White (1989).

professional journalism all around them which they seek to imitate. They see televised news produced by an industry where high praise is given to people who look good or project well on camera, where a deep, well-modulated voice is often considered more credible than is a well-written, well-researched, well-contextualized presentation of information (Ellerbee, 1986). They hear news on the radio produced primarily as filler between the hit records and advertising jingles. They read newspapers that have placed a "naive" description of "objective" reality as the highest goal to be attained (See: Carey, 1987), even as this objectivity promotes the interests of the powerful, that is, government and big business.[2] They recognize the financial squeeze on news departments mandated by top management tears many questions of journalistic excellence, much less audience understanding of the issues of the day, asunder.[3]

Moreover, half the independent television stations and more than 20 per cent of U.S. public radio stations (along with some

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[2]See, for example, Hartley (1982); Hertsgaard (1988); Kern, Levering, and Levering (1983); Lapham (1989); and Liebling (1975), among many others.

[3]Robins (1989). Buddy Ray, the general manager of WTVG in Toledo, Ohio, says that recently televised local news "is more of a business. We have to keep a closer watch on the financial side." This has led to massive personnel cutbacks which have affected the quality of local news coverage. Chapin Day, a KGO (San Francisco) assignment editor,...has seen his news department staff cut by 20 percent between 1986 and 1989. He says, "(a) producer doesn't have the time he did in the past to carefully consider a story. There's not sufficient planning--not sufficient time to do stories. Too often people aren't getting that time when they say, 'Hey, I have a great story. I need two days to report it and two days to shoot it'" (43-44).

network-affiliated tv and commercial radio stations) have no news operations at all, or have significantly scaled back their news operations recently (McKean and Stone, 1991), making for an ever-tightening job market. A survey by the National Association of Broadcasters of 1987 journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients, for example, found that almost half did not find jobs in media-related industries upon graduation. Among those who majored in a news/editorial or broadcast sequence, fewer than half went into newspaper, wire service, or radio-tv employment after college (National Association of Broadcasters, 1989).*

The skills with which graduating seniors were prepared to meet the world were narrowly focused upon those imagined useful to an industry unwilling or unable to utilize what they had been trained for. To merely teach the basics necessary for entry-levels jobs is to waste the resources and talents of most students, by making their skills obsolete on the day they begin their professional careers (Fancher, 1990).

To do this in order to propagate an information delivery system geared more toward the financial needs of broadcasters (Robins, 1989; Hartley, 1982) and publishers than it is to the needs of viewers, listeners, and readers (See, especially,

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*Additionally, a survey of a large school of communication showed that, in a graduating class of more than 300, more than 90 percent of journalism and mass communication graduates went elsewhere upon graduation, and that only eight percent went into such entry level reporting jobs (Task Force on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education, 1989, p. A-5).

Hertsgaard, 1988; Liebling, 1975; Hartley, 1982) further keeps them from realizing their potential. For a large number of students, therefore, the focus of their post-secondary education has been so narrowly defined as to be marginally useful to them professionally, as well it denies them a critical foundation upon which to attempt to engage media or the world in which they live on their own terms. This approach to journalism education is an example of a curriculum based on the needs and interests of powerful institutions, rather than the needs and interests of students.

It is vital to consider how a new journalism program can be constructed, positing itself more to the potential needs of its students who will be active participants in society, rather than solely to the imagined needs of industry. As Schulman (1991) suggests, this can be done by an active integration of theory and practice. Curricula can be designed which acknowledges the necessity of abstraction formed from concrete interaction with the world (p. 2). Students learn and practice their skills during active engagement with the world outside the classroom.

Such theory-driven practice has been difficult in traditionally-constituted journalism programs.[3] The typical journalism school curriculum has been widely criticized for the following deficiencies:

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[3]Because of the standards for accreditation established nationwide by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), the curricula of undergraduate journalism programs have, for the past 50 years, varied little from institution to institution.

1. **Placing too little emphasis on the development of writing skills.**

Students are typically trained through various series of textbook exercises. While these are good at teaching formulaic approaches to the description of events, they are inadequate to allow students to relate the human experience through a variety of expository styles. Some of the best professional journalists come from English and literature programs (or other Liberal Arts areas) in college, where expository writing skills are stressed. By focusing narrowly on writing skills necessary for entry-level reporters, the more traditional journalism programs unnecessarily constrain their students to follow basic newswriting formulae.

2. **Placing too much emphasis on training for media machinery and too little on educating thoughtful critics and consumers of the media.**

Learning to styles of presentation currently in vogue (and to the equipment) as ends in themselves, rather than as tools for expression, necessarily stultifies the growth and, ultimately, the creative capacity of the people who use them. The vocational emphasis of such programs does not provide students with a sufficiently wide range of options to allow them to grow after they leave school. This works to the disadvantage not only of the men and women who seek to learn, but also to the industries and to the society which seek to benefit from the fruits of their learning.

3. **Allowing students to neglect their liberal arts courses in favor of professional courses, so that they graduate with a reasonable skill in communicating without having much of substance to communicate.**

ACEJMC mandates a 75/25 percent split in the number of Liberal Arts/Journalism courses students are allowed to take. At Ithaca College, we find this to be too restrictive, in that the mandated Liberal Arts courses must be taken outside the Park School of Communications. This limits communications almost exclusively to laboratory courses, overlooking the many courses offered in the critical and ethical studies of communication offered by the School's faculty. Thus, the AEJMC mandate fails to recognize the modern structure of communication theory and practice the School offers.

4. Journalism programs typically focus on the entry-level needs of U.S. communications industries, rather than on the needs of students.

The 1989 report of the Task Force on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education focused on the need to supplement journalism skills courses with the needs of industry, stating "the close association between Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC) Education and the communication professions is worth preserving and strengthening" (Task Force on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education, 1989, p. A-3).*

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*"There are at least four desired outcomes for a JMC major...A well-prepared graduate will possess (1) a set of field-related skills; (2) a broad education grounded in the liberal arts; (3) a value-system that emphasizes public service; and (4) the ability to integrate these things 'in relation to life and work in the world.'

Not surprisingly, these broad outcomes correspond nicely with our present theory of JMC curricula. We seek to prepare students by

A critical understanding of the industries and their norms, or critical methods of expression which break through or beyond the norms of the commercial communications industries are given little consideration within the guidelines. Neither are the personal or professional needs (in terms of growth and the potential long-term career options) of students. A new direction for journalism education needs to answer these criticisms directly. The journalism program at Ithaca College is designed to do so:

1. The development of writing skills is emphasized in both the journalism courses and other writing courses required of all journalism majors.

The most important journalistic skills -- gathering information quickly from many sources, resolving conflicting accounts of events, integrating opposing points of view, producing a coherent, easily understood, and comprehensive account of the issues involved, all while working on a tight deadline -- will be skills that students can use wherever they go. This is why reporting and writing skills are so important.

Students must also be at ease expressing themselves in a variety of formats. The more variety they have had in their educational experience, the more they will be able to move laterally in responding to the needs of a changing professional environment.

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putting them through skills courses with an emphasis on liberal arts; by providing a context in which to make decisions (history, law, ethics, economics of the media, etc.); and by helping them see how these things fit together in a pattern (albeit a shifting one) that will be useful in the "real world" (p. A-4).

2. **The education of thoughtful critics and consumers of media is emphasized in the Critical Media Studies component of the program.**

Students need to develop not only a voice, but also a critical understanding of the major issues of their times in order to be effective. They must have "something to say," in addition to the ability to say it. The journalistic world is full of people who are technically proficient but who have little depth in any area they cover. A program which teaches only skills and courses about media industries can graduate students who are ill-equipped to understand the stories they are covering.

The program provides a small number of courses emphasizing critical analyses of media content and industry structure. This allows students to learn and to practice the necessary skills of conceptualizing and synthesizing ideas from multiple perspectives. This is especially important, since the ability to synthesize is fundamental to the development of judgment and for the application of learning to real-life situations (Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in Higher Education, 1984).

3. **Journalism majors are required to develop a second area of expertise, usually in politics, economics, history, or literature.**

By requiring that our students develop a second subject area, we can help them begin to establish a non-skills based area of expertise. This also allows students to pursue other interests (indeed, if they have none, what kinds of journalists would they make?). Some of the best journalists come not from

any established journalism program, but rather from economics, history or politics. The program teaches students how to write the news, but also to understand some of the issues they are covering with a high level of sophistication.

Usually, the second areas are structured from existing minors throughout the College. A number of chairpersons from these departments have indicated that they would like to develop special minors especially tailored to the needs and interests of journalism students. Yet, individual interests are supported. Students retain the option of designing a self-created second subject area to cater to such interests.

4. A dynamic new journalism program must be more international in focus.

With major change in international economic and political systems almost a given in the 1990's and beyond, older curricula assuming the dominance of U.S. business and journalistic practice are changing. With the preeminence of the United States in decline, the citizens of the 21st Century must be more knowledgeable about international events than ever before. And, with the growing dominance of multi-national ownership of mass media, journalism graduates will no longer compete only with others from Syracuse or North Carolina...The graduate of tomorrow will have to compete with people from Rome, Paris, Budapest, or Tokyo -- all of whom are multi-lingual.

All other factors being equal, therefore, a multi-lingual person will have a greater advantage than will one who is facile only in English. The need to master a second language, as well

as to learn about another culture, is vital. It is imperative that journalism students begin to master a second language prior to graduation. We plan that each student have a minimum of two years (12 semester hours, or its equivalent) in a modern language of her/his own choosing.

In sum, the areas of emphasis for the Journalism Major are well-grounded in industry and scholarly writing. They attempt to meet the needs of young men and women who seek to be competitive in the changing world of the 1990's and beyond. The challenge for a new journalism program is how to break both the students and the teacher out of the educational bind of the more traditional approach which, we find, serves the interests of neither. Both students and faculty need to engage in a critical dialogue about the forms and content of news, as well as with the ways in which sources of information can be utilized. Students must come to understand that the practice of journalism is not disengaged reporting about the world, but rather the active engagement with it.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The Journalism major at Ithaca College is divided into seven course areas, to correspond to the areas in which journalism students should be proficient. These seven course areas -- Communication Core, Journalism Foundation and Concentration, Critical Media Studies, Writing, Second Subject Area, Modern Language, and Electives -- are designed to teach students how to conduct coherent and probing inquiry, to propose, analyze, and

evaluate strategy, and to express themselves in both oral and written form with precision, clarity, and vigor.

1). The **COMMUNICATION CORE** courses provide a foundation and overview of the history, law, ethics, and processes of mass communication.

2). The **JOURNALISM FOUNDATION AND CONCENTRATION** courses comprise the heart of journalism studies at Ithaca College. They provide sufficient flexibility for students to concentrate in print, broadcast, or photo journalism. A new course, "Introduction to Journalism," provides a necessary foundation from which all subsequent journalism work will grow. This course would also serve students from around the campus who are considering this subject area as a major or minor field. The production course sequence ends with a choice from three capstone courses, within which students are expected to produce professional-quality work for public consumption, such as publishable articles, regular news and public affairs program series, and so forth.

3). **CRITICAL MEDIA STUDIES** courses allow students the opportunities to see their work in wider contexts than the needs of industry. An Alternative Media course, for example, examines the social, cultural and political contexts within which non-mainstream media technologies exist, based on theoretical, historical, and present-day materials. A seminar called "Issues and the News" provides a critical examination of both the social, political, and economic issues of the times, as well as the ways in which the various media around the world present such issues.

4). Central to the journalism program must be a conscious blending of writing, journalism skills courses, Writing, a comprehensive subject area outside of journalism, and **WRITING**. Most professionals in print or electronic journalism, almost every reporter of any renown, and almost every advertising, public relations, magazine, television, radio, or other media person who has made a mark for him or herself has argued strongly that graduating students need as many writing courses, as much writing experience, and as much ability to express themselves clearly and concisely as possible. Such writing courses are to be distinct from reporting, copy editing, layout/design classes, or broadcast journalism skills classes. The more writing we allow our students to do in the process of their education, the better it will be for them.

The program requires a minimum of three writing courses (9 hours) over and above what is offered in the School of Communications. For students who want to emphasize print journalism, four courses from the Writing Program are required. The focus is upon honing their writing skills in a variety of areas. Between these and the writing classes they will be taking in the Journalism Program, students will be required to take between six and nine writing classes to qualify for their degree. This can only help them no matter what directions they choose to go upon graduation. Many students may be scared away by writing classes, but if this skill is not emphasized sufficiently, those people who are serious about journalism as an academic pursuit or

a career will be cheated. Those who pursue other careers will benefit from writing in a variety of formats.

5). **SECOND SUBJECT AREA** -- Many departments in the Ithaca College School of Humanities and Sciences offer minors that would be open to our students. Each of these has an internal logic which has been established by the faculties of the respective departments. Some students might benefit from a self-created second subject area, such as combining French language with international business, French history and art. The journalism major contains the flexibility to allow students this option on a case-by-case basis (in consultation with their advisor) as needs be. The second subject area should be seen as a way of structuring electives to fit student interests and strengths, rather than as a mandate to take specifically required courses.

6). **MODERN LANGUAGE** -- As the United States loses its dominance in the world economy, the citizens of the 21st Century will have to work in a more interdependent world. This situation will require an increased understanding of the international ramifications of news events, and a greater need for journalists to speak more than one language. Students who now compete in the job market with peers from Syracuse University or the University of Maryland will find themselves vying for jobs with people from Holland, Germany and France. Students overseas may well be fluent in a number of languages; our students will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage if they speak only English.

In view of the ongoing globalization of the news profession, all journalism majors at Ithaca College are required to demonstrate a modern language proficiency up to and including the intermediate level.

7). There is also room for individual exploration, which is where **ELECTIVES** fit in. This proposed program might seem to offer little flexibility in terms of electives. However, the Second Subject Area should also be seen as a set of electives, tailored to the needs and interests of individuals. It provides a structure within which students may pursue alternative interests.

All Journalism majors begin by taking four core courses: Introduction to Mass Media; Ethical Issues in Mass Communication; History of United States Mass Media; and Government and Media. Students are also required to take three additional journalism foundation courses: Introduction to Journalism; Journalism Research; and News Reporting and Writing.

The concentrations are structured subject areas that both encompass students' professional needs and build upon areas of strength within the Park School of Communications: Broadcast Journalism, Print Journalism, and Photo Journalism.

BROADCAST JOURNALISM CONCENTRATION

The Broadcast Journalism concentration grounds students in the theory and practice of radio and television news. Our goal is to prepare these students for the reality of electronic journalism as it exists today, while at the same time educating them for future changes in this rapidly developing field.

Students who select Broadcast Journalism will start to specialize in the specifics of radio and television news in two courses. Seniors will conclude their required courses with a pair of workshops, Radio Journalism Workshop and Television Journalism Workshop, which put into practice the principles addressed in virtually all the previous course work. Radio Journalism Workshop gives students the opportunity to produce and air an investigative radio news and public affairs program, emphasizing long-form reporting and substantive subject matter. Television Journalism Workshop offers a similar arrangement for television. In each case, students will face the challenge of not only reporting for broadcast media, but also producing live programming built around their work as journalists. Writing ability will be a particularly important factor in both these capstone courses.

The sequence of courses, beginning in the first year with a general introduction to mass media principles and ending in the fourth with advanced on-air news magazine productions, gives the student concentrating in broadcast journalism a thorough, well-rounded background in the theory and practice of electronic news.

PRINT JOURNALISM CONCENTRATION

The Print Journalism concentration grounds students in the theory and practice of newspaper and magazine journalism. Our goal is not only to ensure that students develop the skills that will equip them to report and edit for newspapers and magazines, but also to ensure that they have an understanding of the history

of the American press, journalism ethics, and the role of the print news media in this society.

Having laid a firm groundwork in their foundation courses, students who have chosen the Print Journalism concentration then move on to developing their reporting and writing skills in a series of four more specialized courses: News Editing; Feature Writing for Newspapers; and Advanced Projects in Print Journalism, a capstone course in which they demonstrate their ability to research and write a series of investigative articles, feature stories, or op-ed articles for newspapers.

Journalists bring a variety of experiences and strengths into their work, from humorists (James Thurber or Russell Baker), novelists (Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell), or essayists (E.B. White, John McPhee), to poets, playwrights, and critics. Print Journalism students will be required to work in a variety of styles in order to contribute to the discipline of becoming a writer. Since students will be urged to explore different means of written expression as each discovers his/her own "voice," those enrolled in the Print Journalism Concentration will be asked to choose two courses from the many advanced courses offered in the Writing Program.

Those courses, in conjunction with the second subject area concentration required of all journalism majors, the modern language requirement, the critical media studies component and electives, are intended not only to prepare print journalism majors for their first media job, but also to equip them to think

creatively about their trade throughout their careers.

PHOTO JOURNALISM CONCENTRATION

The Photo Journalism concentration grounds students in the theory and practice of making photographs for newspapers and magazines. Our goal is to ensure that students develop an understanding of the stylistic, aesthetic and ethical factors involved in the communication of information through photography. This goal is accomplished by vigorous analysis of both historical and current trends in photo journalism and documentary photography. In addition, the students will acquire skills that will enable them to produce competent images in a variety of technically demanding situations.

Once the foundation courses have been taken, students will go on to take the following sequence of courses: Introduction to Photography; Intermediate Photography; Documentary Photography; Photo Journalism; and Photography Workshop, a capstone production course in which students pursue projects designed to fit the individual's background and interests with the goal of producing portfolio-quality work.

The Photo Journalism curriculum, taken in conjunction with the other courses required of the journalism major, will ensure that the photo journalist receives an education that is both thorough and diverse. Students committed to Photo Journalism will emerge with an understanding of the multidisciplinary demands of the area, and they will possess the intellectual and technical skills necessary to execute their craft.

Conclusion

This is, admittedly, a broad-ranging, comprehensive major, with 45-48 hours of coursework required within the Roy H. Park School of Communications. The Writing requirement mandates an additional 9-12 hours of courses, and the Second Subject Area will require 18-22 hours more. Although this may seem to be a daunting array of requirements to get through, these seven course areas will provide our students a unique combination of rigor and flexibility.

Many of the leading figures in the broadcast and print journalism industries have continually advised students NOT to obtain their undergraduate degrees in journalism because, they say, in such programs students are being taught outmoded skills and ideas fashioned on needs which no longer exist. They advise students to major in English, history, sociology, or politics (See, e.g., Wyatt, 1991).

Therefore, the proposed program is well-grounded in the liberal arts as defined by scholars across a range of disciplines, and professional education as discussed by many people working in the various industries.

Taken together the various skills emphasized in this program are essential not only for journalists, but also for people who are going into law, business, and other professions. A new journalism program must be useful to students with a variety of career and personal goals, since many people who have been majoring in journalism programs have not been going into

journalism as a profession. Graduates of the Ithaca College journalism program will be prepared to compete successfully for jobs as reporters, editors, and producers for daily newspapers, wire services, weekly newspapers, magazines, radio news programs, and television news programs. In addition, the program will prepare students for careers in such related areas as free-lance writing, technical writing, public relations, speech writing, history, journalism education, government public affairs, or book publishing and editing. And the new program will be additionally attractive to students who plan to go into law or business school after graduation.

This journalism program is designed to allow students to be active creators of their own education. We see this program as planning for their entire four years of undergraduate education. They are free to pursue their own interests while learning and practicing their critical skills in the world outside the classroom. It is an attempt to create a dialogic pedagogical setting for students and their faculty. They learn to be active participants in their world, rather than passive observers.

The challenge is to provide a structure within which they begin to see themselves as capable of acting, where they can begin to test their own strengths and talents for engaging the world on their own terms. The new Ithaca College journalism program is based on the belief that journalism education involves the engaged process of interaction by people in the comprehension of the major issues of the time, not a formulaic approach to the

description of events. Journalism education involves an understanding that human actions are never discrete, but they come as the confluence of culture, history, tradition, codes. Students need to learn how to enter into a dialogue, both with the issues they are covering, and with the readers/listeners/viewers with whom they wish to communicate what they have found. As teachers and students come to share a dialogue to transform themselves through education, so, too, can students enter a dialogue with their sources of information, the subjects of what they are reporting about.

WE plan to create dynamic curricula in which people can understand the dynamics of human communication in people's lives, and how these affect the cultures with which journalists (and, through them, their readers/listeners/viewers) come into contact (Schulman, 1991). Thus, this model of journalism education is a practical attempt to merge Martin Buber's philosophy with a student-centered (rather than industry-centered) pedagogy: it is dialogic journalism education for the future.

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